

HOW S/CROWN/O BECAME HM/SO

By John Nelson.

On the 29th June 1948, Mr H. Shore, a philatelist writing from P.O. Box 1655, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, asked the General Post Office in London for certain information concerning the denominations of British postage stamps issued to British Army Post Offices and having B.M.A. overprints.

As an apparent afterthought he added the following paragraph, "I see British stamps are being perforated "Crown S O" and used by the Stationery Office. As no perforated stamps are shown in the Gibbons Catalogue I cannot obtain the following information from them. Please let me know therefore if any other Government Department perforates stamps similarly."

The G.P.O. in an attempt to find the answers to this query, spoke on the telephone with the Stationery Office and were advised that the bulk of the perforated stamps were used on letters which were sent to foreign countries. The perforating was done by the Stationery Office and this work was not performed for any other departments.

At this point, however, someone in the Post Office checked up on the regulations governing the use of perforated stamps and pointed out that the use of the crown was not in accordance with those regulations. Following a preliminary telephone discussion, an official letter was sent by the G.P.O, to the Stationery Office saying that the Postmaster General wished to inform them that his attention had been drawn to British stamps perforated Crown S O being used on correspondence to foreign countries. With reference to Page 23 of the Post Office Guide would they please arrange for their department to use initials only in accordance with the regulations. This letter was dated 17th August 1948.

It would seem that the Stationery Office made no objection to the G.P.O's request and took steps to have new perforating machinery made to replace the S/Crown/O dies.

This took about six months and on the 23rd February 1949. The Stationery Office advised the G.P.O. that arrangements had been made to perforate stamps HM/SO only. Existing stocks of S/Crown/O valued at approximately £1000 were expected to be exhausted in the Duplicating and Distributing Division within one month, and in other branches and offices within two months.

The G.P.O. replied on the 28th February 1949 to the effect that they were very pleased to hear that in future the regulations would be complied with.